

## THE *PASSAMEZZO*, ITS PRESENCE IN 17<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY HUNGARIAN SOURCES

Gábor KOVÁCS<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *Due to the long Ottoman invasion and political as well as cultural troubles, only extremely few sources have survived, which could provide with information about music and dance in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Hungary. The research of the author focuses on the Western European connections of the musical material of these sources, comparing them with the relevant Western musical collections and dance books. In present article attempts to present a review about the European connections the Passamezzo, one of the most popular dance and musical form of 16-17<sup>th</sup> century.*

**Keywords:** *Passamezzo, music, dance, Codex Caioni.*

### I. A brief history of the *Passamezzo*

The name of *passamezzo* is possibly originated from the Italian “*passo e mezzo*” [step and a half]. The musical examples of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century that bear the characteristics of the type that was called *passamezzo* in the second half of the century (in the collections of Attaignant and others [1]) were usually labelled *pavanes*. [2] During the 1500s three main types of the *passamezzo* appeared as the basis of (mainly keyboard and lute) sets of variation:

1. *Passamezzo antico*
2. *Pasamezzo moderno*
3. Freely composed *passamezzo*-grounds [3] (e. g. *Passamezzo Ongaro*)

Although in this article only the 2nd and 3rd types are involved, it is worth devoting a brief discussion to all three types of the genre. The different types of the *passamezzo* represented several grounds that were the basis of variations. This technique is closely connected with the choreographical form of the *Passo e mezzo* that was also a series of

“*mutanze*” (often rather complicated variations of step sequences executed by one person of the dancing couple and then repeated by the partner) as we learn from Caroso (1881, 1600, 1605), Negri (1602, 1604, 1630) and Lupi (1600, 1607). According to 16<sup>th</sup>-century theory [4] the many types of ground were based on certain harmonical schemes. The schemes belong to the two most important modes, which in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries evolved to the minor and major modes:

- 1 B molle (with minor third)
- 2 B quadro (with major third)

(For a detailed discussion of the schemes see Hudson, 1970.)

The levels of the variation in the compositions based on the *passamezzo* grounds are different: sometimes they are restricted to the playing of a simple chordal texture but often they are long and elaborate series of variations. [5] The *passamezzos* are often followed by a triple-meter afterdance (*Tripla*, *Proporz*, *Galliard*). [6]

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<sup>1</sup> Institute of Arts, Faculty of Music, University of Szeged.

### I.1. Passamezzo antico (Ex. 1)

The type is in B molle and is based on the scheme VII. [7] Pieces that are based on this can be found by Ammerbach (1583) [8], Bernhard Schmidt the Elder (1577) [9], Paix (1583) [10] and others.

The extant choreographies of the Italian dance books of Caroso (1600) [11] and Lupi (1600, 1607) [12] are based on the passamezzo antico type. (Lupi does not provide the music but the fact that he discusses the same manner of variation suggests that he means the antico version such as that found in Caroso.)

The 17<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian sources do not contain any passamezzo antico but one example titled as Padovana can be found in the so called Istvánffy Manuscript of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.[13]

### I.2. Passamezzo moderno (Ex. 2)

This is the B quadro mode and based on the scheme IV. [14] According to Hudson's (p 177) scheme IV of B quadro mode the model is closely connected to the Spanish *zarabanda* (I-IV-I-V I-IV-I-V). The other harmonic grounds that belong to this scheme are irrelevant here as they do not contain the characteristic start of I-IV-I of the passamezzo moderno. The example of Marin Mersenne also belongs to this type. [15] Pieces that represent the type can be found in the collections of Attaignant (1529 [16], 1530 [17], Neusiedler (1536 [18], 1540 [19]), Ortiz (1553) [20], Mudarra (1569) [21], Ammerbach (1571, 1583) [22, 23], Bernhard Schmid, the Elder (1577) [24], Facoli (1588) [25], Radino (1592) [26], Anonymous tablature of the Berlin Staatsbibliothek (1593) [27], Bernhard Schmid (1607) [28] and Storace (1664) [29] and others.

In the majority of the sources the I-IV-I-V formula can be found. The low VII occurs in *Recercada segunda* of Ortiz (1553) (Ex. 3) or *John Come Kiss Me Now* of Byrd (see later).

In *Recercada tercera* (Ex. 4) there is an extension in the bar-structure that is an unusual practice in the passamezzos.

The extension is both rhythmic (a hemiola in bars 7-8) and harmonic (an insertion of VI in bar 7). It is also an unusual phenomenon that the bar 9 is only two-half long. That it is intentional is proved by the continuous melody of the solo instrument and also that the endings of the phrases are the same during the whole piece. This is an early example of extending phrases by concerning the two-bar hemiola as an equivalent of a one-bar dominant before the closing tonic chord. In connection with this the piece is also an example of the broken cadence. The reason for mentioning this is that both phenomena are a significant characteristic of the European dance music in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian sources.

Another unusual example of the presence of the passamezzo moderno is in the chanson *Ma peine n'est pas grande* of Clement Jannequin (1545). Besides the text of the original, the peculiarity is the arrangement of the passamezzo moderno in the manner of four-part polyphony that was rare at that time. (See below.)

There is a particular, English example of the passamezzo moderno: the Quadro Pavan (Quadrian pavane, Quadran pavan). The name, which appeared first in the 1570s [30], derives from "passamezzo B quadro". [31] This derivation suggests that the compositions under this title are passamezzi moderni (in spite of the passing measures pavan that is based on the ground of the passamezzo antico). The question is, however, the subject of debate.

Apel [32] thus refers to the compositions of Byrd [33] and Bull [34] in Fitzwilliam Virginal Book as passamezzi moderni. The Ex. 5 is an example of Quadro pavan for lute. [35]

John Ward directs our attention to the connection between the Buffon [36] and the keyboard arrangements of the English tune: "John come kiss me now". [37] The basis of his theory is the passamezzo antico ground

that is entitled by John Playford as “The Ground of John come Kiss”. [38] Ward provides us with many references, with such interesting early examples as the intabulation of the above mentioned chanson of Clement Janequin “Ma peine nest pas grande” in Attaignant (1545) [39] and a piece without text in the collection of Phalèse (1549). [40] Although the harmonic scheme of the chanson does not exactly match the passamezzo moderno, its undoubtable relation with the tune of Arbeau and other Buffons (and also John Come and Kiss Me Now) makes the connection obvious.

He also demonstrates that in many 16<sup>th</sup>-century continental and British manuscript sources, behind the musical pattern “Antycke” there is the Buffon as well. Referring to Cecil Sharp he suggests the tune of “Shepherd’s Hey” can also lead back to the passamezzo moderno. Finally he mentions a ballad text that was written to the tune of Les Buffons and begins as “John, come kiss me now” (Ex. 6) that is a real “Buffon” as the scheme of passamezzo moderno and the tune of the upper part suggests. [41]

It is also worth mentioning that, although the passamezzo moderno is considered to be strictly in duple time, there are also triple-time examples in Caroso (1581) [42] and Praetorius (1612) [43] that are not entitled passamezzo moderno but are based undoubtedly on its ground. The title of Praetorius suggests the same martial connection as “Le Buffons” of Arbeau and the below discussed Hungarian “Bufonata”. (The music of Caroso and Praetorius see below.)

The third example is the group of Quadran Galliards that often follow the Quadro Pavan in the virginal books of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and are based on the passamezzo moderno as well as the following example (Ex. 7) proves. [44]

Both examples of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian sources represent the passamezzo moderno type.

## I.2.1 The passamezzos in the Hungarian sources

### a. Codex Caioni: “Passomeze” (Ex.8)

The piece is a short example of a varied passamezzo moderno. Although the harmonic scheme is present only once, the composer’s fantasy and skill of embellishment can be clearly seen.

1. Due to the fact that these chords are 4-bar long, each bar has different musical material.
2. Although the composer uses simple techniques: stepwise motion in the treble (bars 3-4, 24-26, 29-30) and the bass (bars 2, 6, 20), broken triads in the bass (bars 1, 5, 7) and several kinds of sequences (bars 13-15, 17-19, 24-26), he presents them an imaginative manner. The imitation in bars 21-23 is particularly clever because the sequential motifs start on different (unaccented) parts of the measures, thus the balance is tilted, but by the end of the C major chord it is restored.
3. He considers all the parts as of equal importance, that is the bass is not restricted to merely holding one note but it also takes part in the musical processes.

### b. Levocský Pestrý sborník: “Bufonata” (Ex. 9)

This piece is singular because of several aspects:

1. It refers to a special field in the dancing practice of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. From Arbeau (1589) we learn the following:

*The Salii or dancers, initiated by King Numa to celebrate the sacred festival of Mars, were twelve in number. They were attired in painted tunics with rich baldrics and pointed caps, a short sword at their side, little batons in the right hand and in the left a shield, one of which was said to have fallen from heaven. They danced to the sound of the tibiae and made martial gestures,*

*sometimes in turn and sometimes all together. [ ... ] Legend has it that the Curets invented the Pyrrhic dance to amuse the infant Jupiter by their gestures and the noise they make by striking their swords against their shields. From these two types of dance has been evolved one that we call the buffens or mattachins.[45]*

Then he provides a detailed description of the steps and gestures of a sword dance for four men. The short musical example that he provides with belongs to the type of the passamezzo moderno as several western European concordances prove. The “buffons-tune” has several examples in the western European sources (Estrée, Nörmiger) between 1517 and 1731. [46]

2. The title of the Hungarian example clarifies that it is related to the above mentioned genre. Although the passamezzo moderno is not as clear as in the previously discussed cases, the concordance will be revealable from the table and analysis below (Ex. 10).

As the relation of the Hungarian piece to the passamezzo moderno may not be obvious at first sight the aim of the following analysis is to give help in revealing the connections between them. As the subject of the investigation is a ground, the basis of the relation should be in the bass. Therefore it will be concentrated on it and avoided the musical proceedings of the upper part.

The solution of the clear understanding of the relation is to reduce the passamezzo moderno to its most basic elements and to build up the structure of the Hungarian example on this basis. The stages of explanation will consider the following:

1. The basic arsis-thesis model of the passamezzo moderno
2. The melodic variations of the basic chords in the Hungarian example
3. The harmonic variations of the basic chords in the Hungarian example
4. The differences in the harmonic scheme

1. The harmonic structure of the passamezzo moderno consists the basic chords only: I, IV, V. Therefore its harmonic process is also very simple. By deduction it can be led back to the basic musical principle: tension → release or arsis (V) → thesis (I). Hudson suggests that theoretically the whole harmonic progress of the passamezzo moderno can be deduced to only one sustained tonic chord. [47] The result of the following analysis is not so radical but the aim of it is to demonstrate something similar:

I	IV	I	V	I	IV	I	V	I
a[rsis]	a	a	t[thesis]	a	a	a	t	t
I	→	→	V	I	→	→	V	I

Harmonically it can be reduced to:

I	V	V	I
	arsis		thesis

Thus the harmonic proceedings between the main points are not more than colorations.

2. The most characteristic variations that can be revealed at first sight are in connection with the rhythmic structure of the piece. The similarities with Arbeau are obvious. (Ex.11)

In the Hungarian example the basic chords are varied melodically in every place of the crotchets. In most of the cases these melodic variations mean harmonic ones as well. This is demonstrated in the next point.

3. The following comparison (Ex.12) demonstrates the chords in the Hungarian piece and also the concordances with the scheme of passamezzo moderno.

Behind the many changes of the chords the original scheme can clearly be seen. Seven of the nine main chords are revealable and five of them are on the main beats. The differences will be discussed in the next point.

4. The slightest differences are in those chords that are not in their correct position in

the structure of weight. In bar 3 the I is represented by the I<sup>6</sup> but it is delayed because of the V sustained from the previous bar.

In bar 4 the closing cadence of I–V–I is replaced by the simpler V–V–I (the incomplete VI and V6 are the result of passing notes). As it does not influence the arsis-thesis relation in the cadence, the composers occasionally use this kind of harmonic elision as the following similar example demonstrates (bars 13-14). (**Ex.13**) :

If we investigate the Hungarian piece from a broader view of the above discussed arsis-thesis relation, it will clearly be seen that even the major differences, such as the lack of IV in bar 1 do not disturb, rather confirm the basic I–V V–I structure.

I hope that the above analysis helps to clarify the relation between the Bufonata of Levocský Pestrý sborník and the passamezzo moderno.

There is no evidence that the example discussed was a stylized variant of a tune for dancing. It is, however, proved by pictorial as well as verbal evidence that the sword dance was one of the highly favoured dance types executed both by soldiers and aristocrats in Hungary for several centuries. [48]

### I.3. Freely composed passamezzos

An account of the passamezzo in Hungary cannot be complete without mentioning a genre that, although there are no examples of it in the extant Hungarian sources, is of utmost importance in the investigation of western European connections with the Hungarian social dance music.

In European sources of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries there are nine that contain examples of “Passamezzo Ongaro” (Ungaro, Ungarorum, Ungerisch) [Hungarian passamezzo]. Among these is the dance book of Caroso (1581) [49] in which there are two choreographies to the tune of the Passamezzo Ongaro. [50] The pieces all represent a type of passamezzo that is different from both the passamezzo antico and moderno. Apel (see above) also refers to it as one example of the “freely composed” type of passamezzo. The relatively large number of the examples, however, proves that the Hungarian passamezzo represents an independent type of the passamezzo. Although it is probably not a Hungarian invention, or at least it has no Hungarian characteristics [51], it is important to mention it here. As Mária Domokos states:

Therefore we have to accept that that there *was* a dance in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century that was called a Hungarian passamezzo, which survived within forty years in nine sources in eight different variants and that for some reason was called Hungarian.

The scheme of the pasomezzo Ongaro can be seen in **Ex.14** [52].

Although the Passamezzo Ongaro belongs to the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Except Caroso’s later editions) it provides a clue to another “Hungarian” dance type: the Ballo Ongaro found in European sources dating between 1580 and 1620. The discussion of this, however, requires another article.

### Examples

#### Ex.1



#### Ex.2



## Ex.3

I IV I V I VII<sub>b</sub> I IV V I

## Ex.4

I IV I V I IV I V VI IV V I I

## Ex.5

Anon: Quadran Pavan

I IV I

7  
V I IV

12  
I V I

## Ex.6

Byrd: John Come Kiss Me Now

I IV I V I VII<sub>b</sub> I V I

Ex.7

Byrd: Quadran Galliard

Musical score for Ex.7, Byrd's Quadran Galliard. The score is presented in two systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system (measures 1-8) includes Roman numerals I, IV, I, and V below the bass staff. The second system (measures 9-16) includes Roman numerals I, IV, I, V, and I below the bass staff.

Ex.8

Passomeze

Musical score for Ex.8, Passomeze. The score is presented in five systems, each with a treble and bass staff. Measure numbers 7, 13, 20, and 27 are indicated at the beginning of the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh systems respectively.



## Ex.13

Caroso: Fedeltá (Il Ballarino 1581)

## Ex.14

## Notes

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